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Extend Prior Authorization (PA) for Therapies

Introduction

This purpose of this discussion is to review current PA guidelines for therapy services and to develop options to streamline the prior authorization process for therapies for the population of children with chronic conditions. Medically necessary therapy interventions are intended to assist in achieving, maintaining, or restoring health and functional capacity and should be individualized based on the child's age and developmental status. One available option is to modify the current PA guidelines. Alternatively, new guidelines could be developed for determining the appropriate duration of a requested therapy service for the population of children who are experiencing significant functional limitations.

Process

One approach would be to identify children and adults, between the ages of three and 21 years who meet the definition of having a chronic condition as defined by Stein et al¹.

Specifically, a chronic condition is thus defined as:

- a) A condition which has a biologic, psychological, or cognitive basis,
- b) A duration or expected duration of at least one year, and
- c) Produces **consequences** including one or more of the following:
 1. Measurable functional limitation(s) compared with others of the same age
 2. Reliance on compensatory mechanisms or assistance, such as medications, special diet, medical technology, assistive device(s), or personal assistance.
 3. A need for services beyond that which is considered routine for the child's age.

Meeting chronic condition consequence-based criteria would not supercede medical necessity requirements. In addition, individuals would not be considered for this extended approval option unless they had at least one prior approved PA for the specific therapy discipline being requested. This initial PA serves to establish a baseline and allows for the assumption that it is reasonable to continue the therapy that has been previously been provided based on:

- ✓ Dx
- ✓ Plan of Care
- ✓ Requires the skills of a therapist
- ✓ Therapy has been of benefit to the recipient

Considerations

A "chronic condition" be defined as a biological, psychological, or cognitive disorder with a duration/expected duration of at least 12 months and a documented measurable functional limitation in physical, adaptive-living skills, cognitive, or communication

¹ Stein, R.E., Bauman, L.J., Westbrook, L.E., et al. (1993) "Framework for identifying children who have chronic conditions: The case of a new definition." *Journal of Pediatrics*, 122 (3), 342-347.

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parameters or reliance on compensatory modalities that result in the need for Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and/or Speech Therapy. By adopting this definition, the focus of identifying children with chronic conditions shifts away from diagnosis to the consequences of an ongoing health condition, its impact on the child's functioning and the need for health and related services.

A standardized screening process could be developed to identify children and adults, between the ages of three and 21 years who meet this definition of having a chronic condition and who have had at least one previously approved PA for the specific therapy discipline being requested.

Clinical options could include extending to six months the duration of PA approval for *direct* therapy services. The approval for direct therapy services for a single discipline would be less than or equal to 8 hours per month.

Clinical options could include extending to one year the duration of PA approval for *monitoring* therapy services. Approval for monitoring therapy services would be less than or equal to 24 hours per year.